Picada Navideña

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Picada Navideña

by Shachaai

Summary

The Lecter-Grahams celebrate Christmas together as a family in Argentina, under assumed names and the summer sun.

Notes

Set a few years in the future after *Commencer Par La Faim.* Don't expect a great deal of plot here; this is primarily slice-of-life festive family fluff with dollops of smut and a sprinkle of murder thrown in.

See the end of the work for more notes

Deseándoles un año lleno de paz, salud y amor.

After her last class of the autumn-winter term, Abigail Lecter-Graham collects her suitcase from the little apartment she shares with two friends and takes the train from Paris Gare du Nord to Amsterdam Centraal. She tells her two roommates she is going to spend her Christmas shopping and partying in the Dutch capital with family friends and they accept this easily: Abigail is a good friend to both of them, and *everyone* knows that Abigail is a rich American whose family must travel often on business. It seems strange to no-one that she might have friends all over the world that will spoil her for a whole break, just like her parents spoil her. After all, the monthly care packages Abigail receives are the envy of the household and all their university friends, each box full of delicious and beautiful things from all over the world, letters from her parents, and cards and drawings from her much younger siblings.

After dropping off her belongings in the apartment she is renting, Abigail enjoys her time in Amsterdam wandering around a few museums and shopping in the Christmas markets - before spending a whole afternoon carefully altering her appearance with the aid of some long-lasting cosmetics, a set of brown-coloured contact lenses, and an outfit so different from her usual choice of Parisian attire her roommates (who claim they know her very well) would probably walk past her on the street without recognising her.

That evening, only two days after Abigail's arrival in Amsterdam, a young omega woman named Cassandra Béliveau takes the 17-hour flight from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol to Santiago International Airport in Chile, with a stop on the way in Charles De Gaulle. Though she may share the same gender and dynamic as Abigail and might look a great deal like her, according to her French passport, Cassandra Béliveau is four full years older than Abigail Lecter-Graham and had been born in France. Should anyone care to look more deeply into her background, records will show Cassandra is a second generation Parisian born to French-Canadian parents, and currently works for her mother's publishing house where she semi-utilises her BA in journalism and media studies from the Paris-Sorbonne University. She is going to Chile to spend Christmas with her long-distance boyfriend, a former international student she had met at university.

In Santiago the following day, Cassandra checks into a small hotel and sleeps away the four hours she gained from her journey. She wakes, changes clothing, eats, and then sleeps again, checking out in the very early morning to take a taxi to the nearest bus depot.

A few hours later, a somewhat sleepy-eyed Abi Marchioni walks into Santiago International Airport and catches a flight bound for Ezeiza International Airport, Buenos Aires, with an Italian passport. She has brown hair and vivid blue eyes, but her shorts are *short* and her shirt is cut flatteringly enough that most people who glance at her aren't looking at her face. An international student studying in America, Abi had skipped her last few classes at university to go skiing in Chile with friends (where she is old enough to drink, unlike in the USA), and

now she is going across the Argentine border to spend the Christmas season with her family, who live just outside of Buenos Aires and are applying for Argentine citizenship.

Two hours later, Abi Marchioni makes her way through border control and collects her luggage, all but stumbling outside the airport terminal to the pick-up area nearby, near dead on her feet. The Argentine sunlight is blinding after the artificial lighting of aircraft and indoors, and Abi digs through her hand-luggage for her sunglasses with squinting desperation as she walks through the stereotypical airport tangle of badly-paced Christmas decorations, luggage and people, pulling her suitcase behind her. She fails to find them before a familiar voice finds *her* , one word carefully pitched for her ears only.

“Abigail.”

The young woman who had once, in another life, been called Abigail Hobbs turns, and the tension bleeds from her shoulders at the sight of the tall, distinguished beta man standing there waiting for her. It shouldn’t, really: Hannibal Lecter-Graham is a known serial killer, cannibal and international fugitive, with lethal talents and sadistic and psychopathic tendencies.

He is also Abigail’s adoptive father, and, when Hannibal opens his arms for her, Abigail steps into his hold with relief, letting Hannibal take both responsibility for their protection and her weary weight, pressing her face childishly into his shoulder to block out some of the terrible sunshine.

“Papa.”

Amidst the human tide around them, Hannibal smells like home, like everything Abigail always forgets until she receives the care package from her family each month and gets a little wisp of their mingled scents clinging to all the things they touched. Love, layered and blended: Hannibal and Will’s aftershaves and colognes, Will’s omega scent, Hannibal’s more neutral beta scent, sweet spice and smoke and amber and musk and pine, gold and crisp and silver all at once. Charcoal and ink. Red iron. Wet river mud. Meat. Mischa, Simon and Reinette’s scents, all the soft sweetness of unpresented children tangled up with the smells of tear-free ‘unicorn’ shampoo and the grass and flowers they like to romp in. The wet smell of children’s paint and wax crayons. Hay and horses. Damp dogs.

It’s been years since Abigail last saw him in person and Hannibal smells like *home*. Oh, it only takes one breath of Hannibal’s shirt and that realisation is rushing over Abigail in a great big wave of *feeling,* weakening her knees and somehow sticking itself in a congealed lump in her throat, pulling her even closer to Hannibal like a small magnet that has just re-entered the vector field of a larger one.

Hannibal, picture-perfect for an airport reunion, responds: though sweat is already beginning to gather in her armpits and on the nape of her neck Hannibal smoothes his hand down Abigail’s back regardless, turning his head to lay a brief, idly fond kiss on her temple.

“Why can’t you escape justice by living somewhere a little closer to Paris?” Abigail asks him somewhat thickly, deliberately trying to sound grumpy in the vain hope Hannibal won’t

realise she is on the edge of tears instead. The last time Hannibal had kissed her forehead had been in *Florence.*

The past is another country. Countries. Things had been different then.

“Perhaps when the twins are a little older,” Hannibal tells her with all his terrible gentleness, stroking her hair despite all its accumulated *ick* from the heat and stress and travelling, completely unfooled. Abigail hates him for it, in a way that doesn’t quite dare to be hate. To be held in Hannibal’s affection is to have nowhere left to hide, peeled back to one’s true self and wet, aching bones. “North Africa has a rich and vibrant culture I would not mind exploring in a little more depth.”

Willing away the prickle of tears, Abigail turns her nose into Hannibal’s neck, seeking the comfort of his scent where it is strongest - as well as the rest of her family’s. Mischa, Simon and Reinette have left their innocent scents on their father with childish kisses and grasping hands, but Will’s scent is helplessly, hopelessly intertwined with Hannibal’s the way the scents of all mates are - impossible to separate when they share clothes and space and press so close they breathe the same air, skin and hearts bare until every part of them meets.

“...Egypt?” asks Abigail, after an awfully long moment of trying to recall any African geography whatsoever from the dusty depths of her tired brain. South Africa, she knows, is at the bottom.

“Tunisia, perhaps,” says Hannibal. His hair is longer than when Abigail had seen him last, left mostly unstyled for the breeze to rakishly ruffle silver-gold strands as it pleases. It is… *different.*

Abigail does not ask *why Tunisia?* because Hannibal will have a myriad of reasons why Tunisia. A hundred reasons. A *thousand.* The food, the culture, the weather, the ease with which he and the rest of the family can live in hiding under assumed identities and Hannibal can hunt his favourite kind of prey...

“...Will couldn’t come?” she asks instead, her voice made small by the lack of her other adoptive parent at Hannibal’s shoulder when she raises her eyes expectantly to look for him. *Didn’t Will want to see me?*

“Étienne wished to be here to greet you,” Hannibal tells her evenly, the catch of his reddish-brown gaze on Abigail’s a pointed reminder to recall their family’s current aliases for conversations in public. *Abi* is close enough to *Abigail* for it to pass, but *Will* and *Étienne* are leagues apart. “But I am afraid there is no rescheduling of Mischa’s weekly babyballet. And, of course, Mischa could not miss her lesson.”

Abigail accepts the chastisement with a brief bow of her head, but cannot help echoing a bewildered, “ *Babyballet?* ” Sure she has misheard.

Hannibal nods once, slow and affirming. Babyballet.

“That’s pretty distant from first aid and Urban Krav Maga,” Abigail points out, since those are the classes that had been *strongly recommended* for her by Hannibal in addition to her

university workload.

“A three year-old is destructive enough without specific instruction,” Hannibal says, with the exact sort of geniality that means *there is time for that yet.* “The ballet is something Mischa expressed interest in after learning I have procured tickets for myself and Will to see an upcoming performance, and all but demanded to attend classes after some research of her own.”

“...She found the frilly pink tutus?” Abigail guesses.

“She chose blue, for herself. And the glitteriest ‘pretty fairy shoes,’ as she calls them, that she could find. You *will* be shown them,” Hannibal warns, his tone resigned but his expression showing he shares Abigail’s amusement when she breaks out into delighted laughter.

“Should I be impressed? Or envious?”

“If you can manage both at once, dear girl, you may make Mischa’s week.”

The airport is on the edges of the city, so, after Hannibal takes Abigail’s luggage and loads it into their car, they head south-west, making good time getting out of the thick of traffic and into the vast flat stretch of the Pampas where the Marchioni - or Lecter-Graham - family have set up their *quinta* home.

Efficient air-conditioning, tinted windows, a bottle of water and aspirin in the glovebox do a lot to help Abigail’s headache even without her sunglasses, and she settles back in her seat in the car with something that’s very close to relaxation, interested in the fields of crops and cattle that fly past her window, little birds flitting to and fro along fences and scrubby hedges. The drive gives her plenty of time to admire them. The endless ruralness of the flatlands is novel after so long living in Paris’ cityscape, as well as the abrupt shift from winter’s starkness to the blue burn of a summer sky.

The *quinta* - country house - is another thing to stare at. The main building sits at the end of a long, *long* private drive: a *huge* modern build, less than a decade old, two-stories high (apparently, with a cellar below ground) and all pale stone, wood and tiling, shining in the sun.

Because Hannibal does nothing *small,* it is, of course, only the flashy tip of the iceberg that is the total enclosed property: a handful of hectares that includes a lagoon that supplies the water to irrigate the land via a sprinkler system; a patch of woodland; a small orchard; stables; a workshop-come-storehouse, and a separate building for staff to live in. Not mentioning the chicken coop. Or the swimming pool that should be right behind the main building.

On paper, this is the home of Constantin and Étienne Marchioni, the mated and married beta-omega parents to Abi, Michaela, Simone and Renée Marchioni. They are very rich and *very* international. Constantin is Franco-Italian by blood, and his husband, Étienne (*née* McGregor), Anglo-French. Their eldest daughter, Abi, now an adult in her own right, studies in America, and no-one will blink twice at her accent(s) nor staying with her family at Christmas.

“You could park an elephant in here,” Abigail mutters about the garage when Hannibal drives them inside of it - the space is large enough for three cars, though theirs is currently the only one there.

“I believe an elephant might prefer the stables,” says Hannibal.

Inside proper, the house is fragrant with evergreen foliage - Christmas trees, wreaths, and cut boughs framing points of interest -, tastefully strung with ribbons of silk and velvet in festive red and gold. Abigail gets barely a moment to admire it before a great skittering of many paws is headed in her direction, summoned by the sound of the car’s arrival and the opening of the connecting door to the garage.

Hannibal sacrifices Abigail for the greater good of his trousers and steps to the side just in time for four dogs to barrel past him into Abigail instead. He does, however, move Abigail’s suitcase before one of the dogs can topple it over - though her hand-luggage is lost under the mass of several excitedly wiggling furry bodies.

Winston, Max and Buster all greet Abigail like the long-lost pack-member she is with wet tongues and wagging tails, but Cephie, the newest addition to the Lecter-Graham pack, hangs back a little, as Abigail is a stranger to her. The enthusiasm of the other dogs and Abigail’s knuckles extended for her to sniff eventually draws Cephie in with the other three, and Abigail crouches down to pet-scruff all four dogs thoroughly, enjoying the canine version of ‘welcome home.’

Of course, four dogs thundering off into places unknown is hardly something easy to miss, even if you’re small. It’s only a few minutes after the dogs arrive that two little voices join the fray with querying *mama?*s - rapidly shifting to squeaked *papa!*s when their owners spot Hannibal instead of Will.

A thunder of small feet brings Abigail’s youngest adoptive siblings, fraternal twins Simon and Reinette, into view out of one of the nearby rooms. At nearly one and a half, they are still chubby-cheeked and demanding of parental attention, quite happy to ignore the nanny following after them and speed-toddle their way into Hannibal’s kneecaps, wrap-clinging around his calves like baby koalas.

Abigail, they stare at with their big blue eyes, having never seen her outside of photographs and video calls.

Hannibal scoops up one twin in each arm, turning around to present them both to Abigail when she rises to full height again, the dogs still milling around everyone’s feet. “Do you not remember your big sister, Abi, *mis cariños*?”

Simon, little head still frothy with the brown cherub’s curls he has inherited from his mother, lifts his face from where he had immediately squished it into Hannibal’s shoulder, and frowns at Abigail. “Abi?” he asks suspiciously, voice to the distrust echoed on the face of his twin.

A fair response, really, since people can look very different in real life from how they look on a flat screen.

“Tableh?” asks Simon, just as Reinette asks, “Phone?”

“Yes, *mis cariños,* Abi from the tablet and phone.”

“Hello,” Abigail offers - and gets a heavy armful of suddenly smiling toddler, Simon wiggling at his father until Hannibal deposits him in Abigail’s grasp.

Simon smells like most happy, healthy toddlers do in the summer: like sunshine, crayons, children’s bubble bath and the hyper-sweetness of apple juice. The mingled scents of Will and Hannibal linger most in his curls where their hands have petted Simon, individual scents combining with Simon’s neutral child scent to smell something a little like spice cookies baked just right.

Abigail buries her nose in his hair just to breathe him in, unsurprised when Simon returns the favour by pressing his face against her throat, curiously investigating the unfamiliar scent of his omega sister near her scent glands. His nails - *sharp* little things - prick Abigail through the material of her shirt as he grips the cloth to steady himself, making a noise in the back of his throat like a happy little *chirrup.*

If Simon and his twin, Reinette, don’t present as omegas one day, Abigail will eat her scarves.

“It’s good to meet you at last,” Abigail tells Simon, mostly ignoring the way the toddler swings his feet in his casual pleasure and kicks her in the stomach. “And Reinette.”

Reinette, the shyest Abigail has ever heard her and half-hiding behind the short fall of her tousled blonde hair, mumbles a small *hello.* Then, looking up entreatingly at Hannibal, “Papa. Hello snack?”

“Hello snack!” Simon repeats a great deal more energetically, and Abigail has to make a wild grab for him as he sits bolt upright and almost topples straight out of her arms.

“Hello snack?” Abigail asks once she’s gotten a good grip on the toddler again.

A *hello snack,* as it turns out, refers to food and drink offered to guests. Mischa had coined the phrase upon realising that, if she came and smiled angelically at guests whilst *hello*s were being said, she could get tasty treats out of people, and had subsequently passed this revelation onto the younger twins.

Hannibal caves to the inevitability of three sets of hungry-hopeful eyes (four sets including the nanny, who has clearly had Hannibal’s cooking before), and Abigail finds herself escorted to the spacious kitchen of the house where everyone (except the dogs, who obediently wait outside) gets a slice of buttered *panettone,* the twins get fresh sippy cups filled with apple juice, and Hannibal, Abigail and the nanny - finally introduced as Eliana - get glasses of Hannibal’s homemade citrus peach cooler straight from the fridge.

On a hot day, the cooler might as well be *ambrosia.* Abigail gulps hers down after a mouthful of *panettone,* missing Eliana leading the twins back out of the kitchen to their playroom in favour of draining her glass.

“I *missed* this,” Abigail sighs to the kitchen at large, because that is marginally more polite than saying *I missed your cooking.* Absolutely worth the handful of assumed identities and hours of travelling.

Hannibal, personally educated in the ways of blue-eyed, brown-haired omegas with a terrible sweet tooth, merely pours her another glass of the cooler. Smiling, as he does, more with his eyes than his mouth. “Your presence was also greatly missed.”

“Even at dividing-up-dessert time?”

“...Perhaps a little less than usual at some particular moments,” Hannibal admits, and Abigail laughs again, before going back to demolishing her *hello snack.*

End Notes

Matambre: (*matar* ‘killer’ + *hambre* ‘hunger’, ‘hunger-killer’) In Argentina, this frequently refers to a sheet of thin flank steak stuffed with ingredients that vary by region (common are vegetables such as carrots and/or spinach, but also palm hearts, ham, chopped hard-boiled eggs, and pepper) and rolled, which is then boiled in milk/water and roasted in the oven. The roll is then sliced, and can be served in a number of ways, eaten hot or cold. Common as an appetiser on Christmas Day (apparently).

You do *not* want to know how much information I browsed through about classes for babies and toddlers for the purposes of this fic/universe.

I’ve fudged the facts around Abigail’s self-defence classes, as, as far as I’m aware, the instructors of Urban Krav Maga are primarily UK-based (though the organisation that teaches the system has expanded or is gradually expanding to the US, Canada, Brazil, Italy, Greece, Russia and Germany), and Abigail lives in France. Urban Krav Maga and Krav Maga are considered separate self-defence systems for a few reasons, among them UKM’s deviation from KM’s principles by introducing pre-emptive strikes, as well as teaching different methods of striking an opponent (using the heel of the hand instead of punching, to protect the knuckles). UKM is considered an especially good self-defence system for women/slighter people, and prioritises avoiding confrontation and escaping from a confrontation using short and intense attacks, whilst utilising one’s surroundings, over sustained fighting. (The ‘knee them in the groin, smack them in the head with a chair when they’re doubled over in pain, and run’ approach.)

Recipe for the citrus peach cooler. (Non-Alcoholic)

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